FIRST COMICS
WARP
JULY NO. 14
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WIZARD'S GAMBIT
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warped words

%FIRST COMICS, 1014 DAVIS STREET, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60201

Dear Editor,

Something about Warp #10 made me write to you. Now I must look within myself and, perhaps, find an explanation for my actions ... yes ... I see ... I can name it! It could only be ... Jerry Bingham!

So impressed was I of this lad's art that I had to let it all out. Let's face it guys, Frank Brunner's art was looking more and more rushed as the issues went by. It was refreshing to see someone who didn't have deadline problems, as it seemed Brunner was having. Any good artist, in a rush to make the deadline, will unintentionally sacrifice the quality of his or her work.

Previously, I wasn't too pleased with Mike Gustovich's inking, but this issue certainly turned me around. Mike was meant to ink Jerry's pencils. The perfect union!

Scott Bishop
50 Sesame St.
Keene, NH 03431

If Frank was having "deadline problems," it's news to me, and I'm the guy responsible for that stuff around here. Deadlines can be the bane of any publication that comes out on a regular schedule, but some people do their best work under deadline pressure — Frank Frazetta, for instance.

But I'm glad you like the Bingham/Gustovich team.

Dear Warped Types:

Every issue during the adaptation of the Warp plays I felt the urge to drop you a line. Each issue was well done, and combined to make a spectacular whole, but never particularly unique. Issue #10 is a unique standout issue that provides me with more than enough impetus to write.

As the story was not an adaptation, it moved a lot more smoothly and easily than the adaptation issues. The characters seemed far more well defined and the dialogue sharper. This is not to put down the adaptation but there is an inherent weakness when a piece is adapted from one medium to another. Here, Peter was working with his own concepts and thus was able to present a clearer view of what was occurring.

While I've always enjoyed Frank Brunner's work and found his work on Warp to be more than adequate, I think that Jerry Bingham's work here is far superior. Jerry has always been one of the medium's most underrated artists, but I've loved his work since the Black Panther at that other company. Jerry combines a firm grasp of anatomy with a mastery of facial detail. I sincerely hope that he gets the credit for being the brilliant artist which he is from a nice *long* stint on Warp.

Jon Green
1927 Orrington, #6210
Northwestern University
Evanston, IL 60201

As I write these words, Jerry is working on **Warp** *#17 — so it looks like you get your wish.*

Dear Folks:

The wizard doesn't understand; Sargon doesn't understand; Cumulus and Chaos don't understand; and I sure as hell don't understand!

After nine regular issues and two specials, I really didn't know what to

expect with the new storyline in number 10. It certainly wasn't to find everything back at square one — well, actually square two since Cumulus didn't revert to his earth-bound personna. Peter Gillis seems to be saying, "All right, the adaptation is finished, let's start all over again and do it my way this time." At least, that's the way it appears to me.

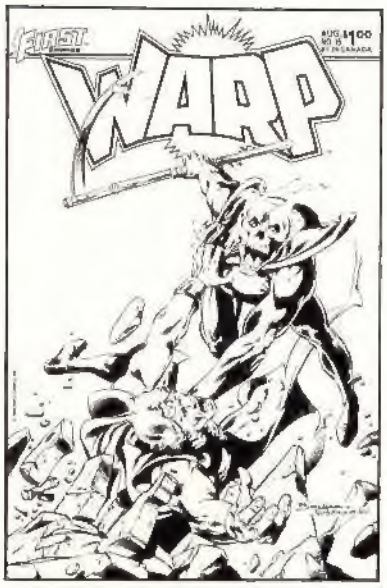
As for the story: the Sargon character is just a bit overdone as one who thinks with a sword rather than a brain. In the entire Warp scenario, she is the stereotype dumb blonde helpless female without the "helpless" part. She is never quite coherent as to what her actions mean to the end result. Me Hulk, me smash, me kill, me Tarzan. Me need a little more thoughtful characterization.

Sgt. Jeff Webb
Box 9324
Co A — USAFS Berlin
APO NY 09742

Both your points are well taken, Jeff. Yes, Peter is doing it "his way" this time — and that's the way it should be. After all, he is the writer. But "his way" doesn't mean re-hashing the original story; it means developing new and interesting plotlines and character developments. And yes, Sargon does need more characterization — and I think you'll find that's exactly what Peter is doing now.

NEXT MONTH: Lord Cumulus has already defeated Death once — at the cost of his mortal identity. But when he goes back to Earth and tries to live David Carson's life, the Grim Reaper comes to settle the score!

Meanwhile, Sargon dons the mantle of Mistress of War once again — but not in the service of Fen-Ra — as the Outrider comes face to face with the enemy from the Iron Star!



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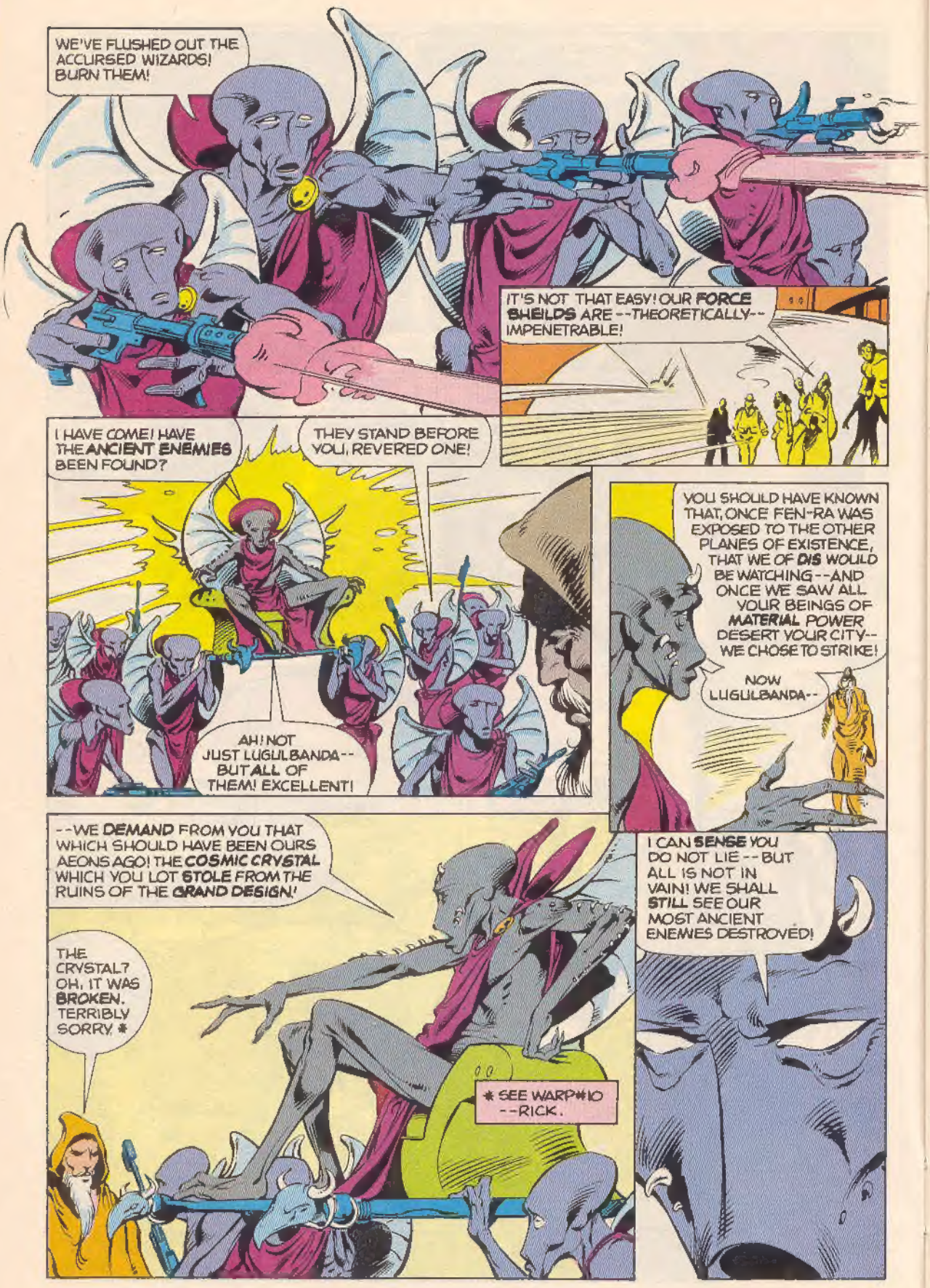
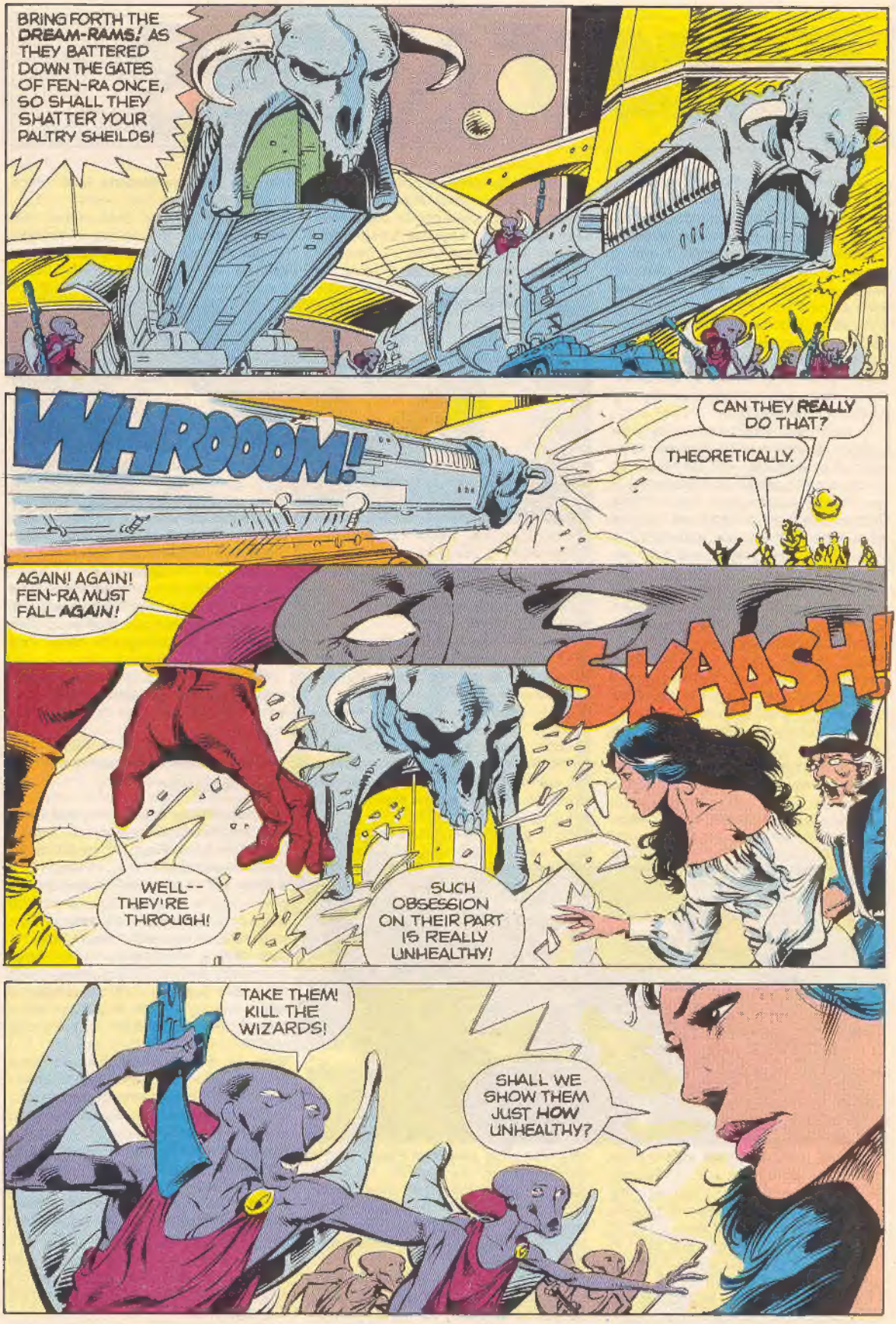
A FIRST COMICS PUBLISHING PRODUCTION

THE HOLY CITY OF FEN-RA IS UNDER ATTACK, GUYS!
WARP™
PETER B. GILLIS · STORY
JERRY BINGHAM · PENCILS
MIKE GUSTOVICH · INKS
RICK TAYLOR · LETTERS
JANICE COHEN · COLORS
RICK OLIVER · EDITOR
ATTACK?
BUT--ALL OUR CHAMPIONS ARE GONE FROM THE CITY!
THEN--ONLY WE WIZARDS STAND IN THE WAY OF UTTER DISASTER!
PERFECT TIMING, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?
Wizards' Gambit!
FEATURING CHARACTERS AND CONCEPTS CREATED BY STUART GORDON & BURY ST. EDMUND

BUT HOW COULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED?
IT'S VERY SIMPLE! CHARGED WITH THE TRIVIAL TASK OF RENEWING GOD AND THE UNIVERSE, LUGULBANDA MANAGED TO UPSET THE PSYCHES OF ALL CONCERNED--SO, ONCE THE BARRIERS WERE DOWN TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD--THEY SPLIT, LEAVING US DEFENSELESS!
BUT AN ATTACK SEEMS INCREDIBLE--AND WE ONLY HAVE THE DOORKNOBS WORD FOR IT--!
OH, BELIEVE IT! YOU, LUGULBANDA, ALLOWED SARGON TO RESIGN AS MISTRESS OF WAR--WHILE YOU, URNANSHE, COAXED LORD CUMULUS INTO GOING TO EARTH TO CLEAN UP HIS LOVE LIFE!
I SAID I WAS SORRY, HOW WAS I TO KNOW?
RECRIMINATIONS ARE AMUSING--BUT A COURSE OF ACTION SEEMS PRESSING, BRETHREN!
PARONOMASIA IS RIGHT! WE HAVE GREAT KNOWLEDGE--AND KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!
KAWHANK!!
AND WHEN THE WIZARDS STRIKE, OUR FOES SHALL TREMBLE!
NOW WHAT?
APPARENTLY YOU SUCCEEDED IN DEMOLISHING THE DOORWAY--AND YET IT STILL STANDS!
I WAS AFRAID OF THIS--!

G'GUMP WILL TELL YOU THAT YOU SMASHED THE DOOR IN ONE SENSE BUT NOT IN OTHERS!
EPISTEMOLOGICALLY VERY TRICKY!
IT'S BEEN SO LONG THAT WE'VE ALL BUT FORGOTTEN: WE ARE CREATURES OF THEORY, OF HYPOTHESIS! NINGISHZIDA, YOU ONLY SUCCEEDED IN THEORETICALLY SMASHING THE DOOR --HYPOTHETICALLY SETTING US FREE! IN ACTUALITY WE ARE STILL TRAPPED!
YOU BETCHA, POPS!
THAT IS WHY FEN-RA HAS EVER NEEDED CHAMPIONS--AH! HERE WE ARE!
I THOUGHT I HAD A KEY FOR TALKING DOORKNOBS--!
AWK!
WAIT! YOU CAN'T NOT IN THE--
NOW WE SHALL SEE--
--WHAT'S GOING ON.
DEMONS!


WE'VE FLUSHED OUT THE ACCURSED WIZARDS! BURN THEM!
IT'S NOT THAT EASY! OUR FORCE SHEILDS ARE --THEORETICALLY-- IMPENETRABLE!
I HAVE COME! HAVE THE ANCIENT ENEMIES BEEN FOUND?
THEY STAND BEFORE YOU, REVERED ONE!
AH! NOT JUST LUGULBANDA-- BUT ALL OF THEM! EXCELLENT!
YOU SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT, ONCE FEN-RA WAS EXPOSED TO THE OTHER PLANES OF EXISTENCE, THAT WE OF DIS WOULD BE WATCHING --AND ONCE WE SAW ALL YOUR BEINGS OF MATERIAL POWER DESERT YOUR CITY-- WE CHOSE TO STRIKE!
NOW LUGULBANDA--
--WE DEMAND FROM YOU THAT WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN OURS AEONS AGO! THE COSMIC CRYSTAL WHICH YOU LOT STOLE FROM THE RUINS OF THE GRAND DESIGN!
THE CRYSTAL? OH, IT WAS BROKEN. TERRIBLY SORRY. *
* SEE WARP#10 --RICK.
I CAN SENSE YOU DO NOT LIE -- BUT ALL IS NOT IN VAIN! WE SHALL STILL SEE OUR MOST ANCIENT ENEMIES DESTROYED!


BRING FORTH THE DREAM-RAMS! AS THEY BATTERED DOWN THE GATES OF FEN-RA ONCE, SO SHALL THEY SHATTER YOUR PALTRY SHEILDS!
WHROOOM!
CAN THEY REALLY DO THAT?
THEORETICALLY.
AGAIN! AGAIN! FEN-RA MUST FALL AGAIN!
SKAASH!
WELL-- THEY'RE THROUGH!
SUCH OBSESSION ON THEIR PART IS REALLY UNHEALTHY!
TAKE THEM! KILL THE WIZARDS!
SHALL WE SHOW THEM JUST HOW UNHEALTHY?

FIRST NOTES

HOW DO I GET A LETTER PUBLISHED?

This is one of the most asked questions I get at comics conventions and in-store appearances. Wise-ass that I am, I usually respond: "Well, first you have to write one." Look, if you don't write it, we don't print it.

We do read each and every word of our mail, but we get far more than we could ever hope to print. But I can give you a few hints on how to narrow the odds a bit. Follow these easy guidelines, and you'll drive our mailman crazy.

1) Address your letter to the appropriate column. **Ivy Graham** sorts our mail out each day, and she separates it according to person or department. If you simply address your mail to "First Comics" it will get tossed in with all the other First Comics mail, including the bills, and it'll take time for us to even see it.

If you address each letter separately to each individual letter column, it will wind up in the hands of the appropriate person. **Joe Staton** gets all the "E-Mail," **Rick Oliver** the "Warped Words," **John Ostrander** that for "Quill and Sword" and for whatever we'll call the **Grimjack** column (?!?), and I get the rest.

2) Please type your letters. If we've got to get the column out fast, we're more likely to run a letter that is easier to read than one that will take twice as long to type up.

3) Have something interesting to say. You may notice there are a few letter writers who get a lot of stuff in print. This

is not only because these people write more often, although that's usually true. These people have something interesting to say that goes well beyond "I really liked your latest issue." Tell us exactly what you thought, and keep in mind the fact that you are illuminating your fellow reader as well.

4) Try and be as brief as possible. We want to get a variety of thoughts on each letters page, and we won't hesitate to cut the fat out of your letter in order to make room. Some of your points might have been made by a previous letter writer; we'll cut that stuff out too.

5) Don't be disappointed if you don't get lucky right away. We can't possibly run all of our mail — even the good stuff.

We want to read as much mail as possible. It's very educational, and it beats the hell out of working.

See you in the funny pages.

BURY THE HYPE

Each time we launch a new title, I ramble on, giving you the behind-the-scenes look at the new project. But this time no such attention is required.

Next month we start our seventh monthly title — but it's one you've already heard all about. It's called **Grimjack**, and you're probably aware of our spinning off the book if you a) read the fanzines or b) read the above "how to get a letter published" piece.

So I'll just give you the facts. **Grimjack** will premiere the first week of April, on sale alongside **American Flagg!**, and it will be done by the team that made the back-up series the most talked about back-up since *The Rocketeer*: **John Ostrander** on words, **Timothy Truman** on art, **John Workman** on letters and **Janice Cohen** on color.

The first issue will be booklength, after which we'll be running short Munden's Bar stories written by John and drawn by the likes of **Steve Bissette, Rick Veitch** and **Joe Staton.**

Ostrander/Truman fans need not despair: they'll still be on **Starslayer,** joined by inker **Hilary Barta,** letterer **Janice Chiang** and colorist **Janice Cohen.** After a booklengther, the Black

Flame series by **Peter Gillis, Tom Sutton** and **Bruce Patterson** will be moving into the back-up position.

To complete our domino effect, **Mars** will be seeing a few more booklength stories and a rather unique back-up mini-series we'll be telling you about in a month or two.

As for **Grimjack,** you can expect exactly the same sort of thing that you've loved over the past nine months — only more of it.

— Mike Gold

FIRST IN MARCH:

American Flagg #10: Scheiskopf takes over the Plex-Mail, as **Howard Chaykin** begins the fourth Flagg trilogy: Solidarity ... For Now, "And That's The Way It Is!"

E-Man #16: **Joe Staton's** wraparound cover (First's first) just rounds out the shattering conclusion to E-Man's battle with his arch-nemesis, Samuel Boar!

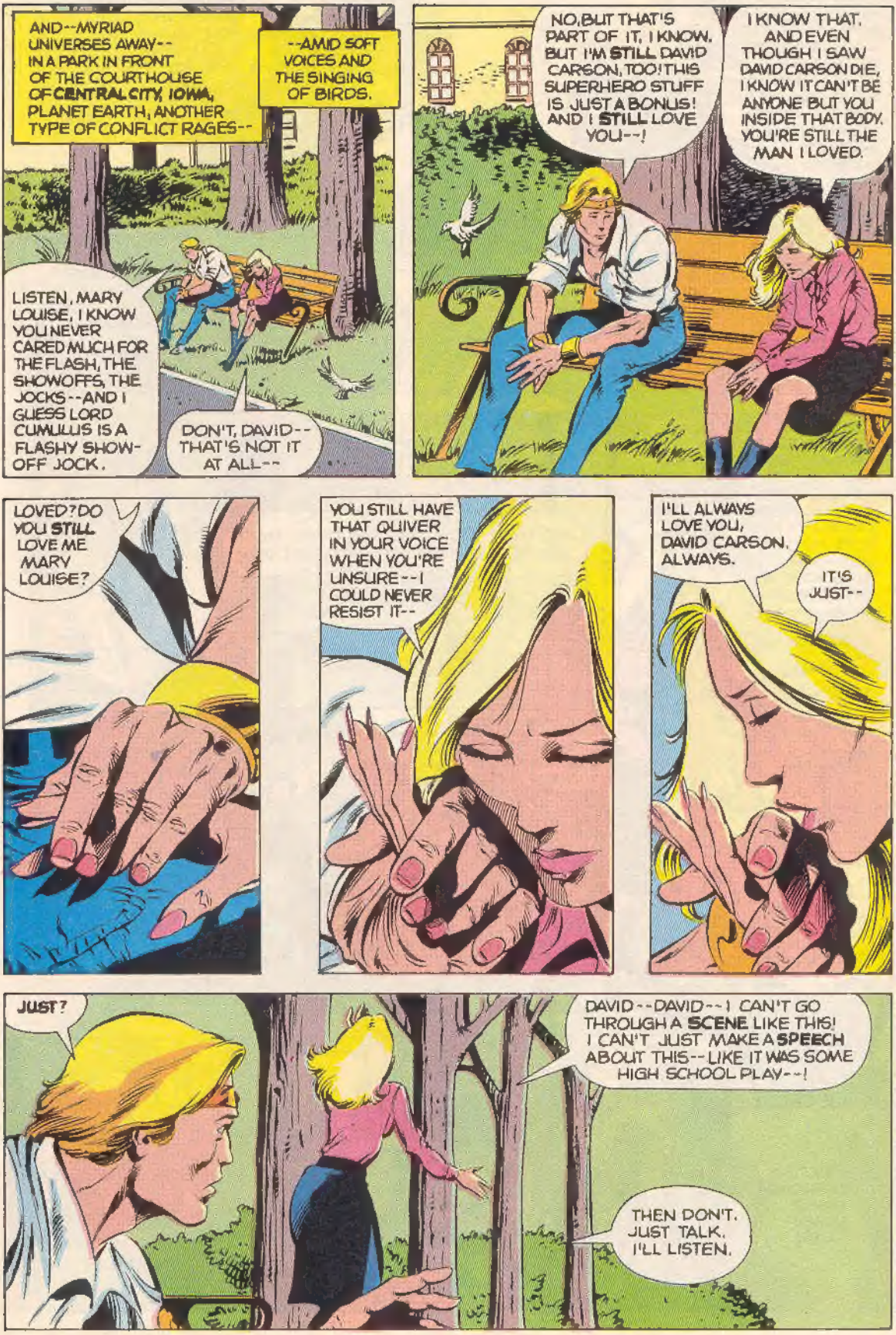
Jon Sable, Freelance #14: After smuggling himself into Vietnam, you'd think **Mike Grell** would give his erstwhile hero a rest, right? Then what's Jon Sable doing smack dab in Berlin, on the wrong side of ... "The Wall"?

Mars #7: A time of beginnings. We're beginning our first Martain multi-parter: World War! And we're beginning the second Black Flame adventure: The Lover!

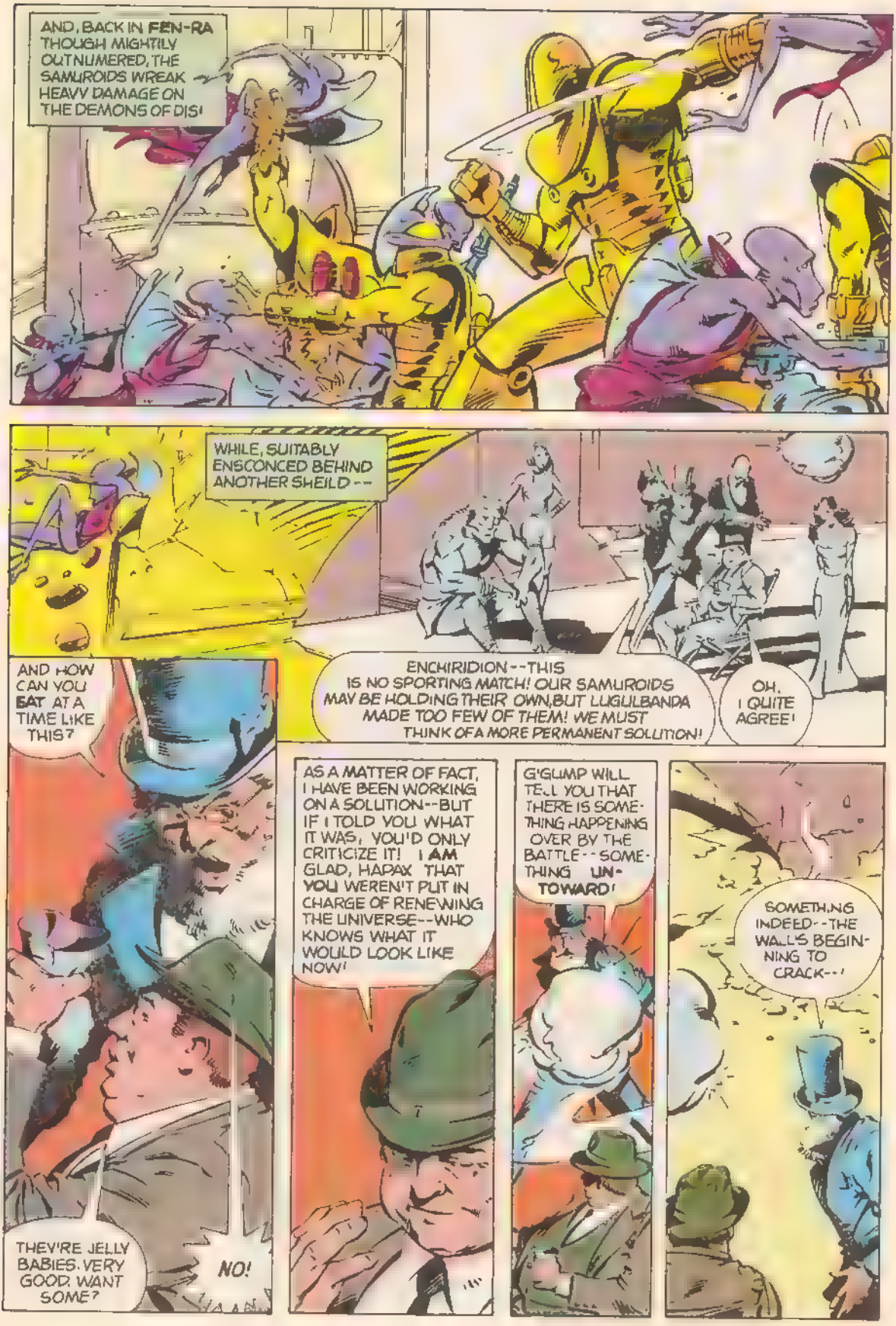
Starslayer #18: At last! Grimjack meets Starslayer, in one fantastic 28 page thriller with the most unexpected guest-star of all time! Another **John Ostrander/Timothy Truman** blockbuster!

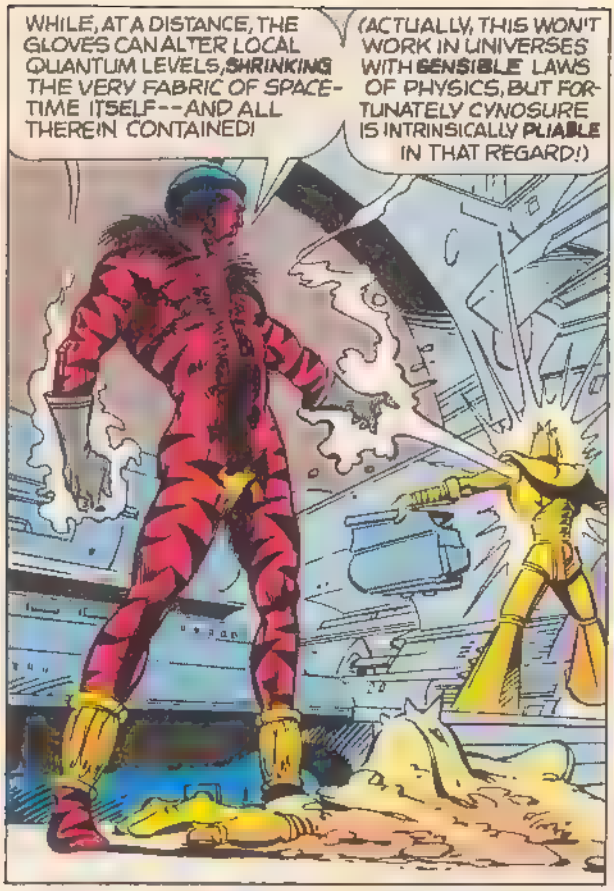
Warp #14: Fen-Ra is under attack, and Sargon and Cumulus are missing! Can Lugulbanda rally the support of his fellow wizards to stave off attack from the Demons of Dis?

WOW! SHE DIDN'T EVEN TOUCH ME--!
THOK!
ABSOLUTELY TRUE--BUT NOT IN THE WAY YOU THINK!
SLAM!
DON'T TAUNT THEM, URNANSHE-- FLATTENING THEM WILL DO!
BUT HOW--? WE KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS-- YOU ARE INCAPABLE OF PHYSICAL FORCE!
THAT IS TRUE--OF WIZARDS--
--BUT THOSE WHOM YOU ARE FIGHTING ARE NOT WIZARDS BUT MY SAMUROIDS--WHO ARE QUITE PHYSICAL, THANK YOU!
YOU SEE, WE DECIDED TO SIT THIS ONE OUT UP THERE--!
THEN-- YOU TOO MUST BE--
JUST SO.
OH NO--!


AND--MYRIAD UNIVERSES AWAY--IN A PARK IN FRONT OF THE COURTHOUSE OF CENTRAL CITY, IOWA, PLANET EARTH, ANOTHER TYPE OF CONFLICT RAGES--
--AMID SOFT VOICES AND THE SINGING OF BIRDS.
LISTEN, MARY LOUISE, I KNOW YOU NEVER CARED MUCH FOR THE FLASH, THE SHOWOFFS, THE JOCKS--AND I GUESS LORD CUMULUS IS A FLASHY SHOW-OFF JOCK.
DON'T, DAVID--THAT'S NOT IT AT ALL--
NO, BUT THAT'S PART OF IT, I KNOW. BUT I'M STILL DAVID CARSON, TOO! THIS SUPERHERO STUFF IS JUST A BONUS! AND I STILL LOVE YOU--!
I KNOW THAT. AND EVEN THOUGH I SAW DAVID CARSON DIE, I KNOW IT CAN'T BE ANYONE BUT YOU INSIDE THAT BODY. YOU'RE STILL THE MAN I LOVED.
LOVED? DO YOU STILL LOVE ME MARY LOUISE?
YOU STILL HAVE THAT QUIVER IN YOUR VOICE WHEN YOU'RE UNSURE--I COULD NEVER RESIST IT--
I'LL ALWAYS LOVE YOU, DAVID CARSON. ALWAYS.
IT'S JUST--
JUST?
DAVID--DAVID--I CAN'T GO THROUGH A SCENE LIKE THIS! I CAN'T JUST MAKE A SPEECH ABOUT THIS--LIKE IT WAS SOME HIGH SCHOOL PLAY--!
THEN DON'T. JUST TALK. I'LL LISTEN.

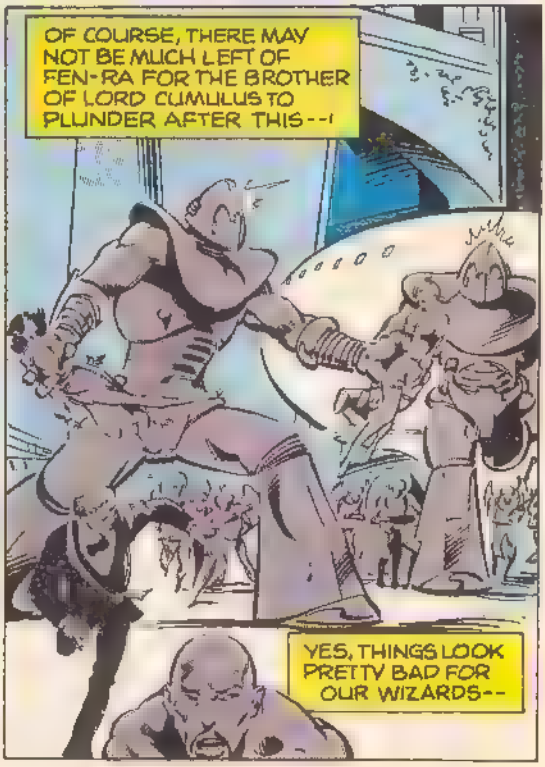
DAVID--YOU REMEMBER I TOLD YOU HOW ALL THE BOYS WERE AFTER ME--I MEAN, BEING PRETTY AND THE BANKER'S DAUGHTER? YOU REMEMBER HOW I WANTED NEVER TO HAVE TO CHOOSE--TO MAKE THAT ONE BIG CHOICE, WHICH BOY I WAS GOING TO MARRY?
I REMEMBER. THEN I CAME ALONG- ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOU REGRET MAKING THAT CHOICE?
NO-- NEVER-- ONCE I DECIDED TO LOVE YOU, THERE WAS NO TURNING BACK. I TOOK YOU INTO MY HEART, DAVID-- YOU WERE EVERYTHING I WANTED.
YOUR HANDS WERE ALWAYS GENTLE, DAVID-- AND THEY STILL ARE. ONLY NOW THEY CAN PUNCH A HOLE THROUGH BUILDINGS. I KNOW YOU HAVEN'T LOST ANYTHING, ONLY GAINED--I KNOW YOU'RE MORE, NOT LESS--IT'S JUST HAVE TO - TO CHOOSE ALL OVER AGAIN, DAVID.
AND THEN--I SAW YOU DIE, DAVID. AND I HAD TO TAKE THAT INTO MY HEART TOO
SEE.
AND WHAT HAVE YOU CHOSEN, MARY LOUISE?
I-- CAN'T TELL YOU NOW, DAVID MAYBE LATER
SURE, MARY LOUISE. SEE YOU LATER


AND, BACK IN FEN-RA THOUGH MIGHTILY OUTNUMERED, THE SAMUROIDS WREAK HEAVY DAMAGE ON THE DEMONS OF DIS!
WHILE, SUITABLY ENSCONCED BEHIND ANOTHER SHEILD --
ENCHIRIDION--THIS IS NO SPORTING MATCH! OUR SAMUROIDS MAY BE HOLDING THEIR OWN, BUT LUGULBANDA MADE TOO FEW OF THEM! WE MUST THINK OF A MORE PERMANENT SOLUTION!
OH, I QUITE AGREE!
AND HOW CAN YOU EAT AT A TIME LIKE THIS?
THEY'RE JELLY BABIES. VERY GOOD. WANT SOME?
NO!
AS A MATTER OF FACT, I HAVE BEEN WORKING ON A SOLUTION--BUT IF I TOLD YOU WHAT IT WAS, YOU'D ONLY CRITICIZE IT! I AM GLAD, HAPAX THAT YOU WEREN'T PUT IN CHARGE OF RENEWING THE UNIVERSE--WHO KNOWS WHAT IT WOULD LOOK LIKE NOW!
G'GUMP WILL TELL YOU THAT THERE IS SOMETHING HAPPENING OVER BY THE BATTLE--SOMETHING UNTOWARD!
SOMETHING INDEED--THE WALL'S BEGINNING TO CRACK--!


WHILE, AT A DISTANCE, THE GLOVES CAN ALTER LOCAL QUANTUM LEVELS, SHRINKING THE VERY FABRIC OF SPACE-TIME ITSELF--AND ALL THEREIN CONTAINED!
(ACTUALLY, THIS WON'T WORK IN UNIVERSES WITH SENSIBLE LAWS OF PHYSICS, BUT FORTUNATELY CYNOSURE IS INTRINSICALLY PLIABLE IN THAT REGARD!)

UNTIL YOU BECOME AS SMALL AND MOTIONLESS AS A CHILD'S TOY.
NUMBER TWO IN A SET--COLLECT THEM ALL.
YOU SEE?--SPACE, TIME, ENERGY LEVELS--ALL COLLAPSED--

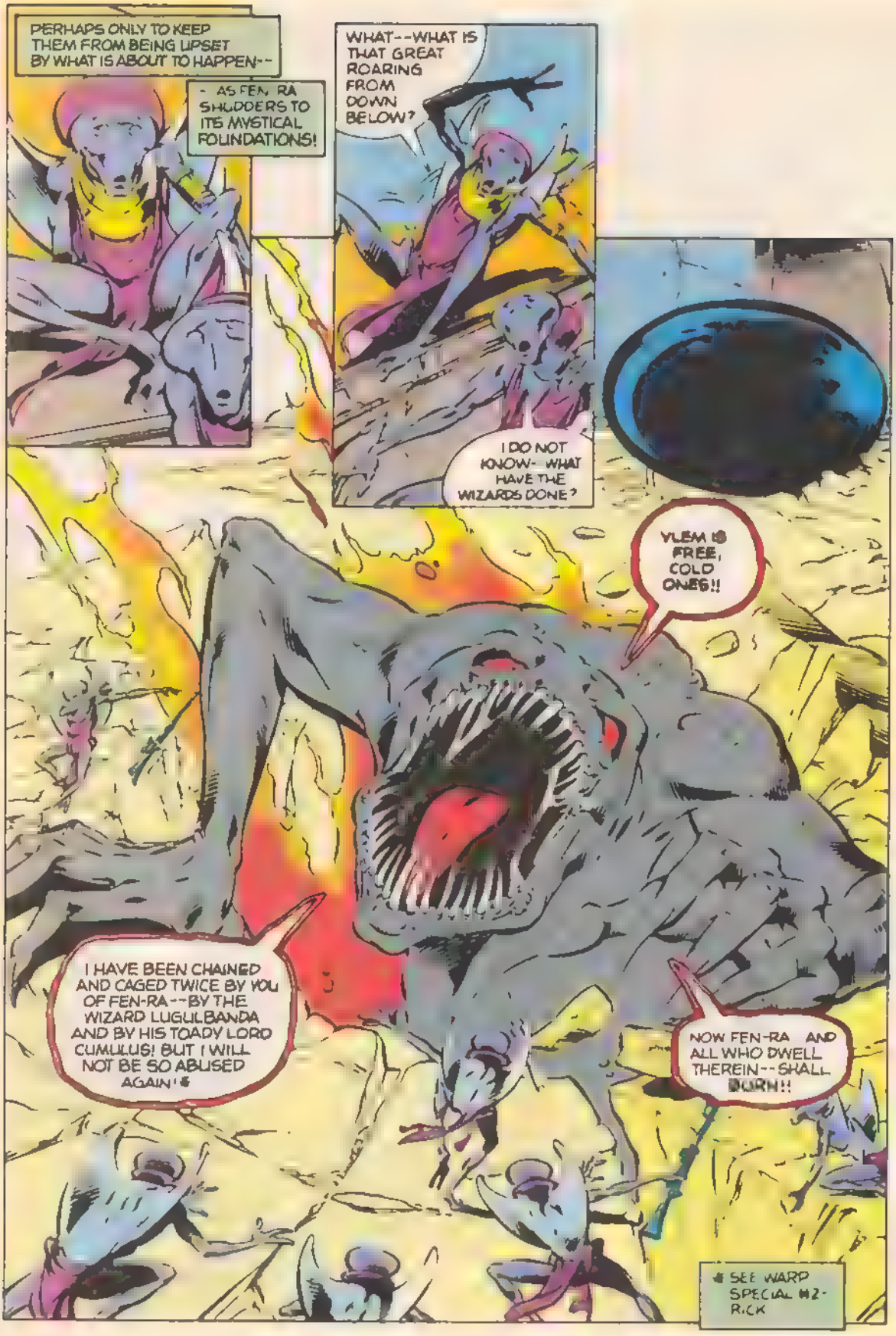
OF COURSE, I'M GOING TO NEED YOU TWO FOR THE FULFILLMENT OF MY GREAT SCEME--AND SOON. SO I'LL HAVE TO REVERSE THE PROCESS AND REWIRE YOU!
BTOOOM!
--SNAP!
STILL, THE GLOVES COULDN'T WORK MORE NICELY! MY INVASION AND PLUNDER OF FEN-RA SHOULD BE A--


OF COURSE, THERE MAY NOT BE MUCH LEFT OF FEN-RA FOR THE BROTHER OF LORD CUMULUS TO PLUNDER AFTER THIS--!
YES, THINGS LOOK PRETTY BAD FOR OUR WIZARDS--

--AND THEY'RE NOT GETTING ANY BETTER
WE SHALL PROTECT YOU, WIZARD EY'AR!
YOU DO WELL, O FACELESS ONES--BUT I CAUTION YOU ON YOUR CHOICE OF VERBS--!
DISSIPATE THE MAGICAL SCUM!
AN OPTATIVE AUXILIARY WOULD BE BETTER SUIT--UNNNH!
RUN!
THAT LOOKS LIKE A PHASON BOMB HAPAX!
WONDERFUL! URNANSHE AND SWOLEWYS GRABBED BY SAMUROIDS--EY'AR FELLED--AND NOW PHA--
SKEEEE-BLAM!
--SON BOMBS!
WELL, ENCHIRIDION? WHAT GOOD IS YOUR PRECIOUS PLAN GOING TO DO US NOW?
WELL, BELIEVE IT OR NOT HAPAX, EVERYTHING'S GOING SMOOTHLY!
NOW I NEED YOUR HELP--

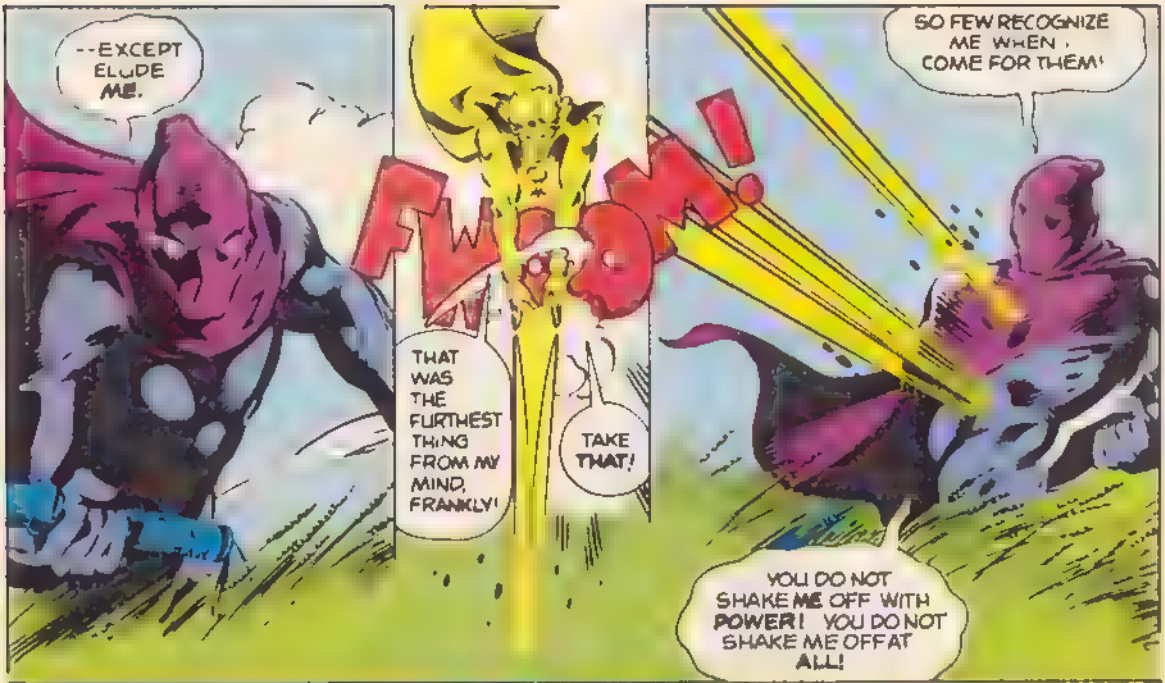
BACK, DEMONS OF DIS!
OF ALL THE WIZARDS OF FEN-RA, ONLY I HAVE DEALT OF LATE IN THE REALM OF ACTUALITIES AND PRACTICA!
THUS ONLY LUGUL BANDA HAS POWER SECULAR ENOUGH TO OPPOSE YOU IN COMBAT!
BLA-LOOM
SKEOW!
FEN-RA SHALL NOT FALL TO YOU AGAIN! BY THE GRAND DESIGN SO BE IT!
AND OPPOSE YOU I SHALL!
AND NOW I SHALL--NO--!
IT MUST NOT BE!
I HAVE EXPENDED TOO MUCH POWER--AND AM DRIFTING BACK INTO HYPOTHESIS!
I'M MELTINGGGG...!

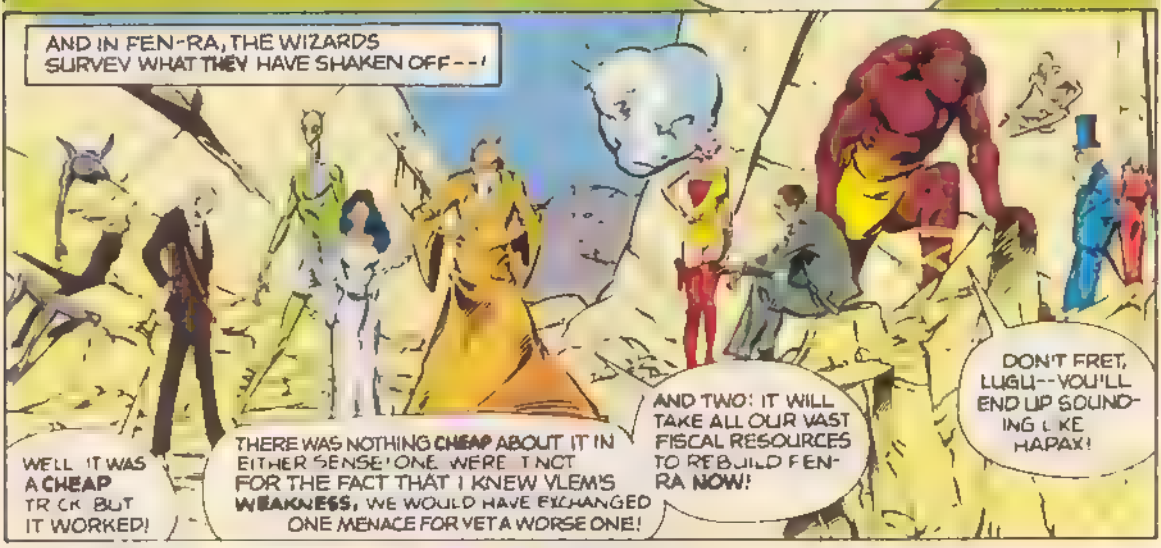
AND WHEN THE SMOKE AND HARD RADIATION CLEAR--
WE HAVE WON, WIZARDS! THE LAST STRONGHOLD OF THE GRAND DESIGN HAS, AFTER ALL THESE AEONS, FALLEN TO DIS!
PERHAPS WE SHOULD KEEP THEM TRAPPED IN THAT BUBBLE AS A TROPHY, COMMANDER?
NO, IT IS CONCEIVABLE THEY MIGHT SOMEHOW ESCAPE.
THEN WHY NOT CAST THEM INTO THE ABYSS?
ABSOLUTELY NONE.
JUST WHAT I WANTED TO KNOW. THANKS.
THAT IS A THOUGHT--!
O, IS THERE NO WAY OUT? NO FORCE IN THE COSMOS THAT CAN BREAK THIS BARRIER?
WHAT IN-- THE BUBBLE IS CLOUDING UP! GOING OPAQUE!
WHAT GOOD WILL THAT DO THEM?


PERHAPS ONLY TO KEEP THEM FROM BEING UPSET BY WHAT IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN--
- AS FEN RA SHUDDERS TO ITS MYSTICAL FOUNDATIONS!
WHAT--WHAT IS THAT GREAT ROARING FROM DOWN BELOW?
I DO NOT KNOW- WHAT HAVE THE WIZARDS DONE?
YLEM IS FREE, COLD ONES!!
I HAVE BEEN CHAINED AND CAGED TWICE BY YOU OF FEN-RA--BY THE WIZARD LUGULBANDA AND BY HIS TOADY LORD CUMULUS! BUT I WILL NOT BE SO ABUSED AGAIN!*
NOW FEN-RA AND ALL WHO DWELL THEREIN--SHALL BURN!!
* SEE WARP SPECIAL #2- RICK

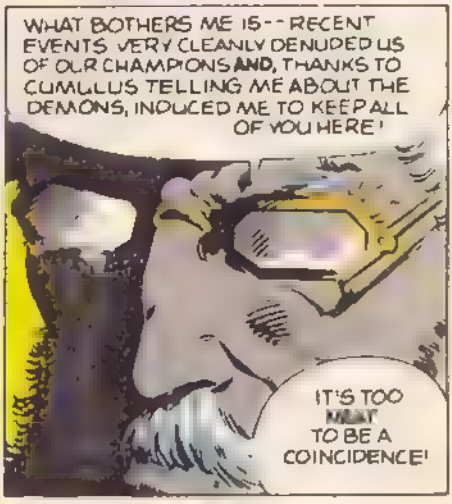
VLEM! THE ANCIENT EVIL!
MIGHTY ONE--WE ARE NOT OF FEN-RA! WE TOO HATE THE CITY--
VLEM THINKS, COLD ONES--
--THAT YOU SHOULDN'T TRY TO BAMBOOZLE AN ANCIENT EVIL!
WE'RE CHANGING--HOW--?
VLEM--NO! THIS IS SOME WIZARDS' TRICK--!
VLEM AGREES WITH YOU!
HE DOESN'T KNOW WHICH OF YOU COLD ONES IS LUGULBANDA--BUT, BELIEVE ME, HE'S GOING TO ENJOY FINDING OUT!
AND A SMALL OPAQUE GLOBE SLIDES AWAY QUIETLY UNNOTICED.
ON EARTH, IN IOWA, THE SUN IS RISING LORD CLMULUS HAS NOT SLEPT THIS NIGHT
MAYBE MARY LOUISE IS RIGHT, IN A WAY. MAYBE I HAVE TO MAKE SOME NEW DECISIONS, MAYBE I CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN--!

I'M NO LONGER JUST DAVID CARSON! SURE I REMEMBER AND LOVE THE EARTH--AND MARY LOUISE--BUT I'M ALSO BROTHER--AND MORE--TO PRINCE CHAOS--AND I'VE SEEN THINGS--DONE THINGS--
MAYBE I JUST DON'T BELONG HERE--!
DAMN IT TO HELL, NO! JUST BECAUSE I'VE GOT THESE POWERS DOESN'T MEAN I CAN'T BE WHAT I WANT TO BE!
I CAN WIN MARY LOUISE ALL OVER AGAIN! I CAN MAKE WHATEVER LIFE I WANT!
AM LORD CUMULUS! I COULD RULE THIS WORLD!
AND I COULD EASILY SAVE IT--OR RESHAPE IT ANY WAY I SEE IT!
WITH THE POWERS I POSSESS I CAN DO ANYTHING! HAVE ANYTHING! BE ANYTHING!
NOT QUITE.
YOU! YOU'VE FOLLOWED ME--HAUNTED MY SHADOWS--STRUCK OUT SECRETLY AT ME! BUT WHO ARE YOU?
YOU CAN DO ANYTHING MY LORD--


--EXCEPT ELUDE ME.
FWOOM!
THAT WAS THE FURTHEST THING FROM MY MIND, FRANKLY!
TAKE THAT!
SO FEW RECOGNIZE ME WHEN I COME FOR THEM!
YOU DO NOT SHAKE ME OFF WITH POWER! YOU DO NOT SHAKE ME OFF AT ALL!


AND IN FEN-RA, THE WIZARDS SURVEY WHAT THEY HAVE SHAKEN OFF--!
WELL IT WAS A CHEAP TRICK BUT IT WORKED!
THERE WAS NOTHING CHEAP ABOUT IT IN EITHER SENSE! ONE WERE I NOT FOR THE FACT THAT I KNEW VLEM'S WEAKNESS, WE WOULD HAVE EXCHANGED ONE MENACE FOR YET A WORSE ONE!
AND TWO! IT WILL TAKE ALL OUR VAST FISCAL RESOURCES TO REBUILD FEN-RA NOW!
DON'T FRET, LUGU--YOU'LL END UP SOUNDING LIKE HAPAX!

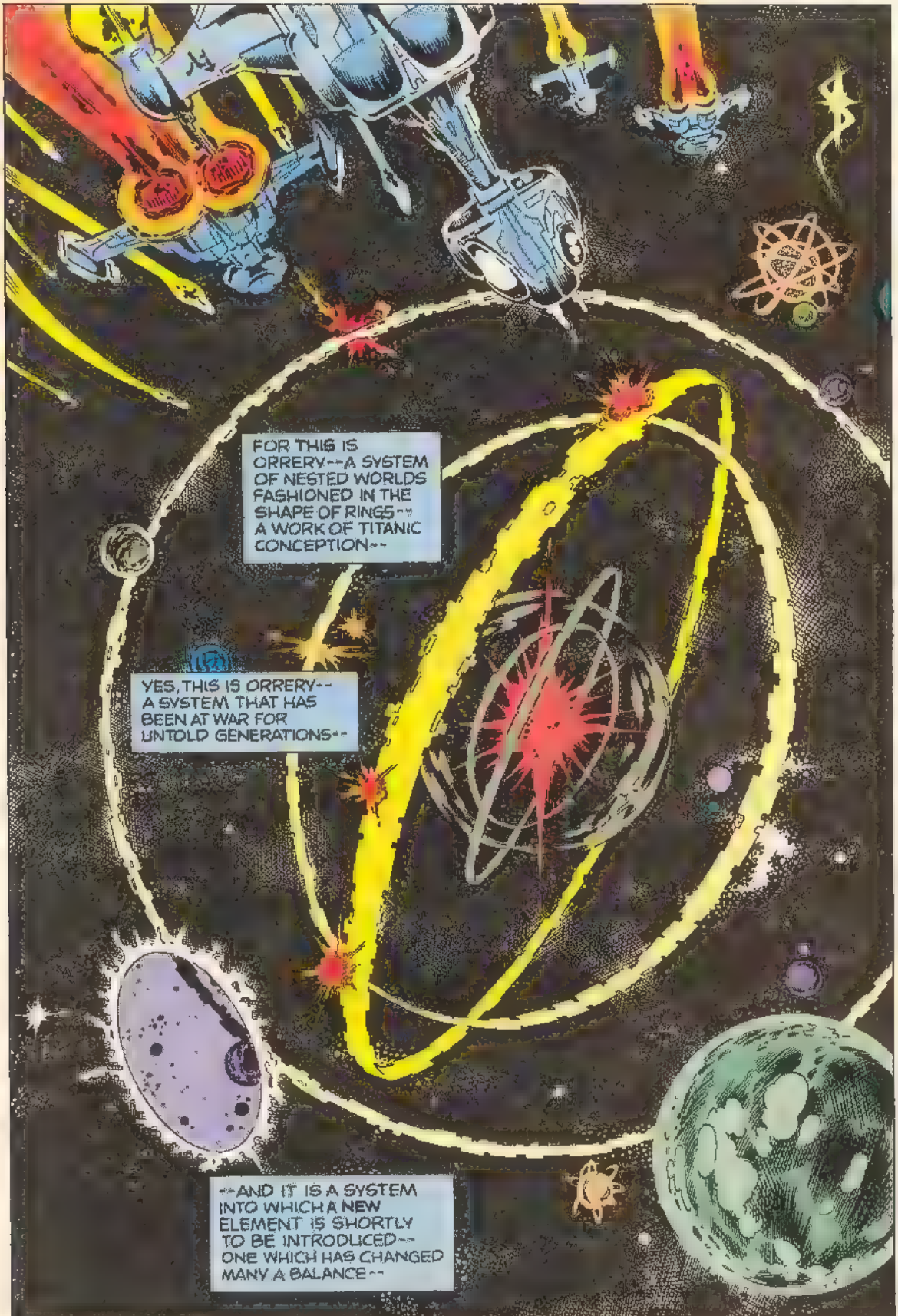
EVEN WITHOUT OUR CHAMPIONS, WE DEALT AN ANCIENT ENEMY A PERHAPS CRIPPLING BLOW WE WON!
THEY STRUCK TOO SOON IS ALL!


WHAT BOTHERS ME IS--RECENT EVENTS VERY CLEANLY DENUDED US OF OUR CHAMPIONS AND, THANKS TO CUMULUS TELLING ME ABOUT THE DEMONS, INDUCED ME TO KEEP ALL OF YOU HERE!
IT'S TOO NEAT TO BE A COINCIDENCE!

ARE YOU SAYING THAT SOMEONE MANEUVERED US INTO THIS UNLIKELY VICTORY? BUT WHO WOULD DO THAT--AND WHY?
MORE--WHO CAN MANIPULATE A WIZARD?
THERE IS ONE ANSWER--ANOTHER WIZARD!
COULD IT BE? COULD ONE OF US BE SHIFTING US LIKE PARCHEESI MEN--PLAYING A SUBTLER GAME THAN ANY OF THE OTHERS CAN SEE?
THE ANSWERS, IF ANY, MUST WAIT--SINCE BACK ON EARTH, THE GAME IS BEGINNING TO GET VERY BASIC INDEED.
NOBODY CAN SIMPLY IGNORE A FORCE-BOLT LIKE THAT! WHO ARE YOU?
LET ME EXPLAIN!
YOU SEE, DAVID CARSON, YOU RECENTLY DIED ON THIS PLANE, AND YET--
--IN VIOLATION OF THE GREATEST OF COSMIC LAWS, YOU SEEK TO RETURN HERE--DEFYING MY AUTHORITY!
NO ONE ESCAPES DEATH!!!
NO ONE BREAKS MY LAW! NO ONE EVADES MY GRASP!
NEXT MONTH: A BIG FINISH!

WAR WITH THE IRON STAR!

OUTRIDER


FOR THIS IS ORRERY--A SYSTEM OF NESTED WORLDS FASHIONED IN THE SHAPE OF RINGS-- A WORK OF TITANIC CONCEPTION--
YES, THIS IS ORRERY-- A SYSTEM THAT HAS BEEN AT WAR FOR UNTOLD GENERATIONS--
--AND IT IS A SYSTEM INTO WHICH A NEW ELEMENT IS SHORTLY TO BE INTRODUCED-- ONE WHICH HAS CHANGED MANY A BALANCE--

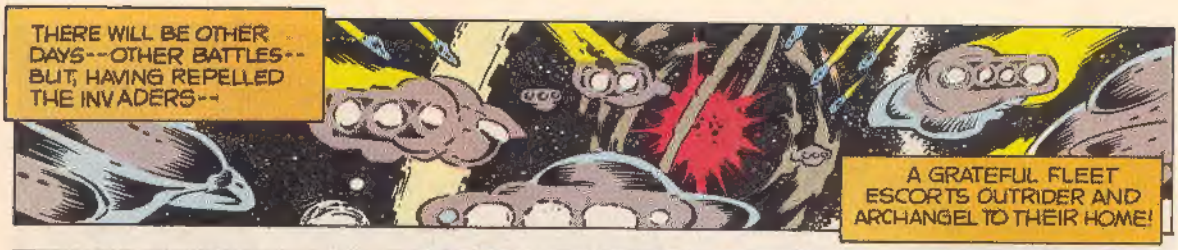
--LORD REGULUS OF FEN-RA THE OUTRIDER!
MADE IT! AND STILL TRAILING CLOUDS OF GLORY--!
IT SEEMS THE GASES FROM THE SOLAR PROMINENCE* GUIDED US HERE-- BUT WHERE IS HERE?
*SEE ALSO [illegible]
DON'T KNOW ARCHANGEL-- BUT LOOK!
AROUND THAT STAR-- I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT!
I SENSE SPORADIC ENERGY DISCHARGE FROM AROUND IT THERE MAY BE LIFE THERE--!
THAT'S PRETTY OBVIOUS-- THIS CAN BE NOTHING BUT A WARSHIP!
MY LORD-- OUR QUEST IS TO FIND THE HEART OF THE SUNRISE--NOT TO GET EMBROILED IN YET ANOTHER PETTY SKIRMISH!
THE VOWS OF A NOBLE OF FEN RA SAY OTHERWISE--AND I DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO SHIPS THAT TRY TO RAM US!
YOU ARE THE MASTER, MY LORD.

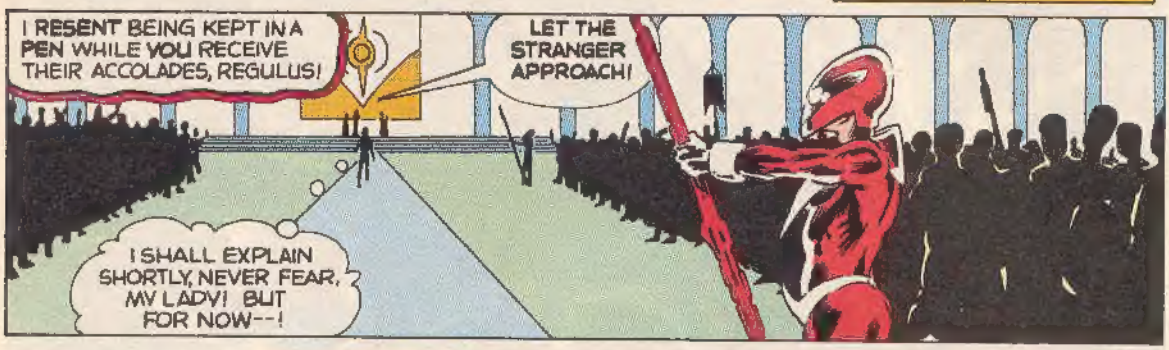
--BUT WE CAN'T JUST INTERFERE-- WITHOUT KNOWING WHO IS FIGHTING-- OR WHY!
SIMPLE ENOUGH TO FIND OUT, MY LADY--
--WE JUST WALK ALONG UNTIL WE FIND THE BRIDGE--
AH, HERE WE ARE-- NOT TOO DIFFICULT--I WOULD SAY THESE FOLKS ARE DEFINITELY THE BAD GUYS, ARCH! THEY'RE FROM A PLACE CALLED THE IRON STAR--AND HAVE BEEN TRYING TO CONQUER THAT SYSTEM JP AHEAD CALLED ORRERY!
--AND THEN BORROW-- PARDON ME-- SOMETHING WITH A LINK TO THEIR DATA BANKS!
I'M GETTING THEIR BATTLE PLANS NOW--!
YOU GETTING ALL OF THIS, MILADY?
PERFECTLY! AND I'M OFF ON MY ERRAND OF MERCY!
I MAY HAVE PHASED THROUGH YOUR VIEWPORT WITHOUT HARMING IT, MY IRON STAR FRIENDS--
--BUT THAT WAS BEFORE I KNEW WHAT YOU WERE
NOW THE BATTLE IS JOINED!
LIFESYSTEMS SEAL US ON THE BRIDGE-- SOME MONSTER'S BLOWN A HOLE IN US!

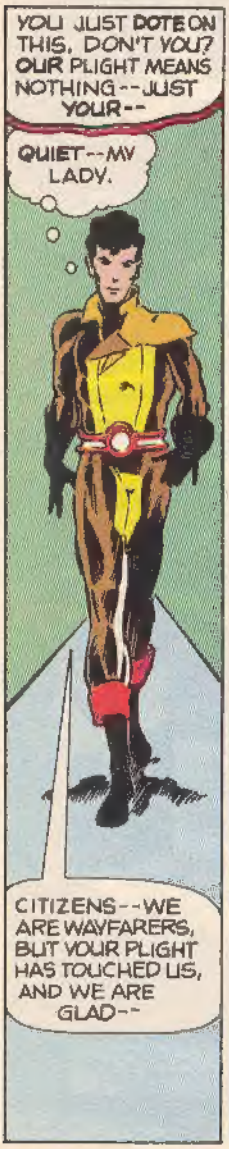
IT'S ALL WELL TO ENGAGE IN WARS OF CONQUEST, YOU JUST HAVE TO EXPECT JUSTICE TO CATCH UP WITH YOU SOMETIME!
AND HERE I AM!
CAPTAIN--HOW CAN WE HEAR HIM IN HARD VACUUM--AND IN OUR OWN TONGUE?
I DON'T KNOW, ENSIGN--
--AND I DON'T CARE! HE'S AN ALLY OF THE ORRERE! AND SO WE SCROOCH HIM!
AN INTERESTING COMBINATION OF FREQUENCIES, CAPTAIN-- BUT I'VE RECEIVED WORSE BLOWS FROM MY GIRLFRIEND!
IF YOU HAVE A GENUINE TASTE FOR BATTLE-- THIS IS HOW A KNIGHT OF THE COSMIC CRYSTAL FIGHTS!

AH TO BE FREE OF THE MAN! IF ONLY I COULD--
--BUT, TO MY TASK--I'VE PENETRATED THE IRON STAR'S PERIMETER--
--AND BY THE DATA I'VE ABSORBED-- THESE MUST BE THE SHIPS OF ORRERY!
AND SO TO WORK!
BEFORE THE EYES OF THE FLEET, THE STRANGE WHITE BIRD GROWS-- AND BEGINS TO BLAZE WITH LIGHT--
--AND THE LIGHT STRIKES DEEP!
BRACE YOURSELVES--!
IF THAT WAS AN ATTACK, CAPTAIN, IT WASN'T--
NO--WAIT! THAT WASN'T JUST LIGHT--THOSE WERE CODED LASER PULSES! THE BANKS ARE SORTING THEM OUT NOW--!
MISTER-- THAT BIRD-- OR WHAT-EVER--HAS JUST GIVEN US THE COMPLETE BATTLE PROGRAM OF THE IRON STAR FORCES!
THEN LET'S GET THEM!

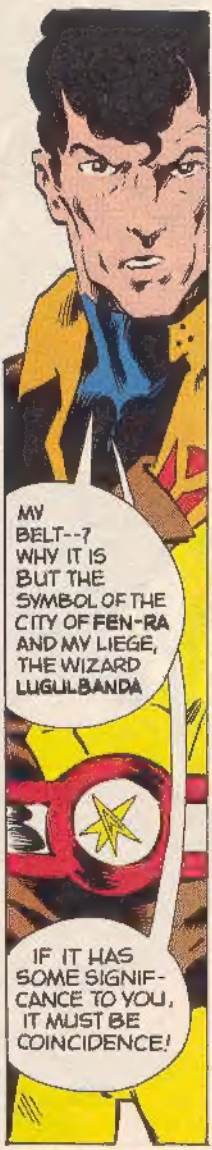
AND SO THE BATTLE IS JOINED IN EARNEST!
STRIKING EXACTLY WHERE THEY DO THE MOST DAMAGE AND WITH THE POWER OF TWO MIGHTY BEINGS FROM A WORLD BEYOND THEIR KEN--
--THE BATTLE FLEET OF ORRERY GRAPPLES WITH THEIR OLD FOES FLEET TO FLEET, SHIP TO SHIP, HAND TO HAND--
--AND PREVAIL!


THERE WILL BE OTHER DAYS--OTHER BATTLES--BUT, HAVING REPELLED THE INVADERS--
A GRATEFUL FLEET ESCORTS OUTRIDER AND ARCHANGEL TO THEIR HOME!


I RESENT BEING KEPT IN A PEN WHILE YOU RECEIVE THEIR ACCOLADES, REGULUS!
LET THE STRANGER APPROACH!
I SHALL EXPLAIN SHORTLY, NEVER FEAR, MY LADY! BUT FOR NOW--!


YOU JUST DOTE ON THIS, DON'T YOU? OUR PLIGHT MEANS NOTHING--JUST YOUR--
QUIET--MY LADY.
CITIZENS--WE ARE WAYFARERS, BUT YOUR PLIGHT HAS TOUCHED US, AND WE ARE GLAD--

COME NO FARTHER --BEFORE YOU SAY MORE, YOU MUST EXPLAIN WHY YOU WEAR THAT SYMBOL ON YOUR BELT! ANSWER CAREFULLY FOR MUCH DEPENDS ON IT!


MY BELT--? WHY IT IS BUT THE SYMBOL OF THE CITY OF FEN-RA AND MY LIEGE, THE WIZARD LUGULBANDA
IF IT HAS SOME SIGNIFICANCE TO YOU, IT MUST BE COINCIDENCE!

THAT IS NOT SATISFACTORY!
CLAP THIS ONE IN IONS!

BY HE WHO DREAMS--!
REGULUS--WHAT'S HAPPENING --I CAN'T FEEL YOU-REGULUS!
NEXT: RAIDERS OF THE IRON STAR!